

Journal of The Ottawa Bonsai Society

Journal de la Société de bonsaï d'Ottawa



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NOTES FROM YOUR STEERING GROUP

Last meeting we had an interesting discussion lead by Duart Crabtree on why so many of the trees that came out of David Easterbrook's Intermediate work shop last spring are now dead. At the end of the growing season only four of thirteen trees (30%) were alive with the remainder doubtful or completely dead. This is a very high mortality rate. It was a great disappointment for the participants because these were nice specimens.

Many of the participants speculated on what the cause of death was. There were many conflicting theories. To try and get some more insight into common problems, Duart sent a detailed questionnaire to each of the participants. He then compiled and summarized the results last meeting and his full report is in this issue of the Journal. A rather surprising conclusion came from his work. I hope that we will all benefit from this knowledge when we work on older plants. Thanks Duart!

Following Duart's discussion and presentation we had a quick look at some nursery stock that we will work on gradually over the next several meetings. This is the start of an on-going hands-on program where we will transform four plants into bonsai. There are three different juniper species and one pine, each with different foliage and growth characteristic. What we propose on doing is divide the members present into four groups and provide each group with a leader and tree. Each meeting we will progress to the next step after briefly reviewing the choices and decisions made at earlier meetings. At the end of the meeting each group will make a short presentation on what was done and why, and what needs to be done next. These trees, with their different characteristics, will provide lots of scope for imagination and creativity. Let's see what we can do!

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Ottawa Bonsai Society Events Calendar



Monday January 17 at 7:00p.m.

There will be three main activities. The first will be a presentation on the type information that should be kept in a log on each of our trees. The second will be a quick presentation of the Japanese Yew as a bonsai. Following this, the group will be divided into four sub-groups, each of which will analyze the strengths and weaknesses of four trees recently acquired from a nursery. Each group will present a few potential design options. Further work will be done on those four trees at subsequent monthly meetings throughout the 2004/05 Season, leading up to a raffle of the finished bonsais in the Spring.

COURS SUR LES BONSAÏS POUR INTERMÉDIAIRES

Suite à plusieurs demandes, il est possible que la SBO offre un cours théorique de niveau intermédiaire! Les sujets possibles pour ce cours sont :

- Les principes pour créer une forêt.
- Les principes pour créer un cascade.
- Les principes pour créer du "Jin" et "Shari"
- Les principes pour créer un style de « balai ».

Le coût de ce cours sera fixé à 20\$ par personne, payable au début du cours. La date sera déterminée au début de février.

Les membres intéressés devraient faire connaître leur choix de sujet préféré à Yvon Bernier au plus tard le 31 Janvier

Yvon Bernier : (819) 684-0586 ; fax (819) 684-7365 ; ycbernier@infonet.ca

BONSAI COURSE FOR INTERMEDIATE

In response to numerous request, it is possible that the OBS will be conducting a bonsai course for intermediate. The possible topics are:

- Design principles to create a forest
- Design principle for cascade
- Principles to create "Jin" and "Shari"
- Design principle for broom style

Cost of this course will be set at \$20 per person to be paid at the start of the course. The date of the course will be determined in early February.

Interested members should communicate their preference of subject to Yvon Bernier by January 31st at the latest.

Yvon Bernier : (819) 684-0586 ; fax (819) 684-7365 ; ycbernier@infonet.ca

Review of OBS Intermediate Workshop

When the "bluestar" and "San Jose" junipers came out of our workshop at the end of May, they looked fantastic and all participants felt they would be great additions to their collections and contribute handsomely to OBS shows in the future.

Through the summer the Steering Group learned that some of the trees were suffering more die-back than expected and a few trees were already dead. We speculated that aggressive pruning, transplanting technique, and/or pests might be responsible.

The relevant histories and status of thirteen junipers brought to the workshop are as follows:

- (1) Eight "bluestar" junipers were about 30 years old; four "San Jose", and one "Pfitzer" were about 15 years old.
- (2) Ten trees were styled at the workshop ("workshop trees"). Nine were pruned extensively and one (Steven's bluestar) lightly.
- (3) Three have not been styled (Mike's bluestar, a leftover San Jose and the leftover Pfitzer) and serve as "controls" for our investigation into causes of die-back.
- (4) Eight trees were repotted at the workshop, or shortly after, with root pruning and soil removal "by the book". Yvon's bluestar had light (<25%) root pruning and soil removal. Four trees have not been repotted (John's bluestar and the three controls).
- (5) At the end of the growing season only four of thirteen trees (30%) are alive. Four (30%) are in poor condition. Five trees (40%) are dead.

In an effort to determine a primary cause for die-back, Duart circulated a questionnaire in October to all workshop participants. Responses were discussed at the November meeting and Duart's, Mark's, and two control trees leftover from the workshop were examined to validate possible causes.

Summary of responses to questionnaire:

Ref	(owner) tree	Status 10/31/04	Branch pruning	Root pruning	Soil left in rootball	Other
1	(VL)bluestar	dead	extensive	by book	substantial	
2	(SB)bluestar	dead	light	by book	substantial	
3	(MW)bluestar	dead	extensive	by book	substantial	
4	(TH)bluestar	dead	extensive	by book	substantial	spider mites
5	(AP)SanJose	dead	extensive	by book	substantial	
6	(YB)bluestar	doubtful	extensive	light	substantial	
7	(DC)bluestar	doubtful	extensive	by book	substantial	
8	(GW)SanJose	doubtful	extensive	by book	see below	
9	(leftover)SanJo	doubtful	na	na	100%	
10	(IM)SanJose	alive	extensive	by book	substantial	
11	(JC)bluestar	alive	extensive	none	see below	
12	(MO)bluestar	alive	na	na	100%	borer
13	(leftover)Pfitzer	alive	na	na	100%	

Gord and some other participants who repotted "by the book" observed that the soil of the original root ball was not drying out while the fresh bonsai soil around the root ball was over-drying. The observation that the old soil and the fresh soil had very different drainage properties begs the question - Could repotting "by the book" have caused die-back by providing an unsuitable growing medium for the roots? Gord repotted again in September, removing the remainder of the original soil, then crossed his fingers.

At the November meeting, examination of roots and soils of the leftover trees (see picture below), a San Jose and a Pfitzer (never styled and still in their nursery pots) was very revealing. The San Jose is now almost all brown and obviously in distress. Only a few of the roots at the outside of the root ball are functioning. The centre of the root ball was very moist and impenetrable, even with a sharp skewer. There was evidence that this tree had been root-bound at some time in the past and had been put in a larger nursery pot without opening the root ball or removing the old soil. Over the years, soil breakdown left the centre of the root ball rock-hard. Roots that had been in the centre of the root ball had long since suffocated and rotted. The Pfitzer had no die-back and the centre of its root ball looked normal.

Participants who assumed that there were live feeder roots at the base of the trunk may have removed a greater percentage of the live roots than we intended and what we thought was light or "by the book" may well have been severe root pruning. We note that John did not repot his bluestar after the workshop. Instead he carefully replaced about half of the soil at the top of the root ball, leaving the bottom roots undisturbed. He reports that his tree is "a bit ragged" but it is alive. It will be interesting to follow the progress of John's tree in 2005.

Osamu Yamazaki states (in *Bonsai Today* #58, pages 54 to 57) that transplanting trees with poor soil "must be done in a different way than is usually done... old soil must be completely removed". Yamazaki added that the owner "must take the risk to remove the remains of poor soil" (at all times taking care to minimize root damage).

Ian's San Jose was the only workshop tree that was repotted "by the book" that did not have severe die-back. All other workshop trees are dead or are in doubtful condition. Perhaps Ian's tree, like the Pfitzer, had better soil in the original root ball. We conclude that our failure to identify poor soil and take the necessary steps when repotting was the primary cause of die-back in the workshop trees.

We did not find evidence in the survey to suggest that aggressive branch pruning was a primary cause of die-back. Two of the workshop trees that had extensive pruning and wiring are still alive. One tree that had light branch pruning died and the leftover San Jose that was not pruned at all is in distress. Valerio Gianotti mentions a difference in behavior between junipers and pines (*Advanced Techniques for a Sabina Juniper*, (BCI's) Bonsai Magazine, Q1 2004, page 34):

"In junipers, the epigeal part is more robust, allowing us to bend, break, incise and cut branches because it will always put forth new growth from any branch or from the trunk, whereas the root portion is very delicate and does not support the shortening of any rootlet"

Only two trees were infested with pests. Mike seems to have eliminated the borer. Spider mites contributed to the demise of Tony's bluestar. Based on reports of workshop trees not infested, we suspect mites would be a secondary cause.

It is unfortunate that so many of the trees are now dead or are in poor condition. In future workshops we must examine the condition of the root ball first and, in a similar situation, consider options to avoid disappointment.

Examination of root ball on two of the intermediate workshop trees ...



was quite revealing!

OBS JOURNAL GOES ELECTRONIC

At a recent Steering Group meeting, Mike O'Connor suggested that we might want to send our Journal out to members electronically. This would result in considerable savings in money and time. The Society would save the cost of printing, envelopes and stamps. In addition, there would be a manpower savings. Members would no longer have to travel to the printer, fold journals and put them in envelopes, attach stamps and mail them.

The Steering Group has been communicating among its members by E-mail for some time and it is very effective. An additional advantage of having an E-mail address for our members is the ability to make announcements on short notice. Finally, E-mail is well suited to the transmission of digitally processed photos of trees and Society activities.

Those opting to receive the Journal electronically can communicate their desire by E-mail to the Treasurer, Yvon Bernier. His E-mail address is in the Journal. In addition, the Librarian, Mike O'Connor, will be canvassing members at the upcoming regular meetings about their participation in this initiative. It goes without saying that those wishing to continue to receive the Journal by mail have that right. After all, our primary objective is to serve the membership by communicating with them.

VENTE DE TROIS COLLECTIONS DE REVUES SUR LES BONSAÏS

Ceci est un rappel que ces trois collections seront mises en vente lors d'un encan silencieux tenu durant la rencontre régulière du 17 janvier. Pour connaître les détails, veuillez relire l'article à ce sujet paru dans le Journal d'octobre. Si vous ne prévoyez pas participer à la rencontre de novembre mais désirez soumettre une offre pour l'une ou l'autre de ces collections, veuillez communiquer avec :

Yvon Bernier : (819) 684-0586
 Fax: (819) 684-7365
 ycbernier@infonet.ca

SALE OF THREE COLLECTIONS OF BONSAI MAGAZINES

This is a reminder that those three collections are to be sold in a silent auction during the January 17 regular meeting. Details about the collections and the auction are contained in the October Journal. If you are unable to participate in the November meeting but wish to make a bid on any of those collections, please contact:

Yvon Bernier: (819) 684-0586
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Ottawa Bonsai Society
Société de bonsai d'Ottawa

2004/2005 Executive

Exécutif 2004/2005

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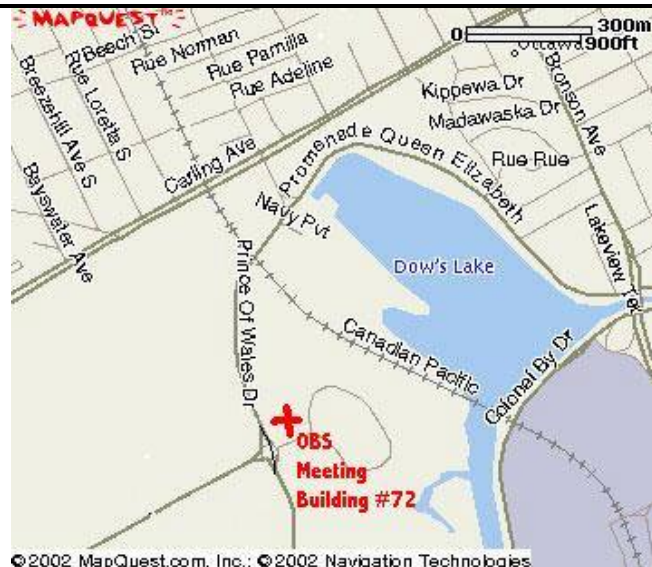
Mike O'Connor

Steering Group Comité d'organisation

Yvon Bernier
Duart Crabtree
Vianney Leduc
Art Phelan
Barney Shum
Gordon Williams
Matt Yakabuski

Meeting Location / Lieu des rencontres

Nos rencontres se tiennent à l'édifice #72 de la Ferme expérimentale centrale. Pour vous y rendre, prenez la direction sud sur la promenade Prince of Wales jusqu'au rond-point à l'intersection National Capital Driveway et Prince of Wales (qui est aussi l'entrée principale de la Ferme expérimentale et de l'Arboretum), où vous prendrez la direction Est menant à l'Arboretum. Une courte distance plus loin, à la première fourche, Prenez la route de gauche qui mène directement à l'édifice #72 (vous verrez une affiche juste en face de l'édifice, de l'autre côté du chemin, qui dit «Friends of the Farm»). Le stationnement est situé de part et d'autre de l'édifice.



Our meetings are held at Building #72 at the Central Experimental Farm. Heading south on Prince of Wales, at the traffic circle at the intersection of the N.C.C. Scenic Drive and Prince of Wales, the major entrance to the Experimental Farm and the Arboretum, exit east into the Arboretum. After a very short distance, where the road divides, turn left to Building #72 which will be down a short distance on your left. There is parking just before or just after the building. The entrance is on the street side (east side) and there is a sign reading "Friends of the Farm".